

## Through the Looking Glass: the Hawaiian Entomological Society<sup>1</sup>

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The annual gathering tonight represents the 936th meeting of the Hawaiian Entomological Society (HES). It was January 1905 when the 1st regular meeting was held 79 years ago. There is no question in my mind that, during these 79 years, the Society has achieved both goals that it set for itself in 1905: "to promote the study of entomology in all possible bearings, and to encourage friendly relations between those in any way interested in the science."

Four previous presidential addresses have focused specifically on the HES and others have touched briefly on aspects of it. C.E. Pemberton in 1950 spoke of the Society as a Community Asset, and Toshi Nishida in 1959 gave an excellent analysis of its growth and activities to 1959. The entomological accomplishments of the Society and its members are well known and appreciated, and I will not review them here. What I would like to do is take a fast trip through the volumes of the *Proceedings* — a diary in a way of the Society — picking up some bits and pieces that I thought might be of interest to you and reflecting on what I found there. Some of what I have to say tonight demonstrates a continuation of some disturbing trends noted in 1959 by Toshi Nishida.

### MUSINGS ON MEETINGS

The 1st regular meeting in 1905 and many meetings thereafter were held in the then boardroom of the Board of Agriculture and Forestry. In June 1914, the meeting place was officially changed to the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association (Sugar Planters' Experiment Station) on a permanent basis and, except for occasional meetings elsewhere, this was our meeting home for 60 years. In Jan. 1974, it was announced that HSPA could no longer serve as our meeting site, library, or permanent address. For a few years thereafter, we met regularly at the National Marine Fisheries, but we had to discontinue our meetings there in 1977. Since then we have met at the Bishop Museum, Manoa Library, and occasionally other locales. But we have yet to find a meeting place with which we can identify with any sense of permanency.

How many of us realize that we have been having Annual Dinner Meetings for only 15 years? The 1st Annual Dinner meeting was at the Princess Kaiulani Hotel, Dec. 1969; since then we have dined 7 times here at Tripler, 4 times at the Ranch House, once at Flamingo Chuckwagon, and once at China House (in 1976 there was no dinner meeting because of the ESA national meetings here). We've had only 3 Masters of Ceremonies: Ray Joyce, Tom Lauret, and Wally Mitchell. Wally has served us 8 times.

### HOW ABOUT ATTENDANCE?

The average attendance for the 1st year of meetings in 1905 was 7.5; small you might say, but this was 50% of the membership. For the first 5.5 decades, 1905 to 1960, annual attendance in percentage of membership was never below 25%, sometimes often higher than 40%. However, even in 1959, Toshi Nishida remarked on what he felt was a disappointing trend in attendance. But in 1959, at least he was able to say that we had always been able to get a quorum. From 1905 to 1945 the

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quorum was 5 members; from 1945 to today, it has been 15 members. In 1982 and 1983, we failed to get a quorum 5 times and just squeaked by 2 more times. Following the relatively high attendance of previous decades, attendance in the 70's fell to about 13% of membership; in 1980, it declined to 12%; in 1981 it rose slightly to 14%; and in 1982 it dropped to 10%. This year, 1983, has brought the lowest attendance in our history, 9% of membership. Considering that 129 of our 205 members have addresses on Oahu, this is appalling. Interestingly, this year, the 1st meeting I believe ever to be held outside Honolulu, in Hilo in August, had 53% of that island's members show up and the highest number of guests (20) ever in our history.

Visitors have been an asset to our Society throughout our history. They are particularly important to a geographically isolated area as ours to allow us to keep in touch with other parts of the world and to promote exchange of ideas and technologies. Important professional visitors — and we have had many — stimulate us and enhance our image internationally; laypersons and students also provide a two-way learning experience.

For the first 3 decades, guests per meeting averaged about 2, rising to 5 in the 1960's, dropping and remaining stable at about 3 guests/meeting to the present. Averages are somewhat misleading here and don't reveal that there were sometimes very large numbers of guests at individual meetings in the 60's and 70's, such as the 10, 11, and 13's sometimes seen.

#### WHAT ABOUT OUR MEMBERSHIP?

There were 14 original members, including 8 professional entomologists and 1 "lady" member, Mrs. Otto Swezey. The original constitution provided that no fees were to be collected from "ladies who are active members." This author considers Feb. 14, 1955, a dim day, indeed, for on that day the constitution was amended to impose payment on women members as well as men.

I got the feeling as I read through the *Proceedings* that the early members were a close-knit group who built and fostered the Society and all things entomological with a heart and devotion that can no longer be found anywhere. An original founder that I feel epitomized that spirit is Otto Swezey of the HSPA. His wholehearted devotion to science and to the Society is reflected in the 39 years that he was Editor of the *Proceedings*, his 4 times as President, and his uncountable notes and papers contributed to the *Proceedings*.

We have lost all our original founders, but we are fortunate to have still with us some of the early pioneers who helped to build our Society and have supported it for decades. Members who joined prior to 1940 and are still active are:

E.H. Bryan, Jr. — joined Aug. 7, 1919

Q.C. Chock — Nov. 1, 1928

F.A. Bianchi — Aug. 7, 1930

K. Sakimura — Nov. 6, 1930

N.L.H. Krauss — Apr. 7, 1932

E.C. Zimmerman — Jan. 3, 1935

W.C. Look — Aug. 3, 1939

We have members as well who have contributed, not necessarily by their length of service, but by their cooperative spirit and sometimes by their efforts doing generally unappreciated tasks: Ray Joyce has now been Editor of the *Proceedings* for the last 5 years, Jack Beardsley was Editor at least 6 years and on the Editorial Board more years than I could count, and Minoru Tamashiro was Editor 5 years. Three of our present members have served not once, but twice as President: Jack

Beardsley, Fred Bianchi, and Elwood Zimmerman. The total "Notes and Exhibitions" given by Jack Beardsley alone in the last 10 years has been 23% of the total, or about 3 times those delivered by anyone else. Long-time members like Wally Mitchell and Elmo Hardy continue to make the Society an important part of their activities.

Though the membership has increased, this core of truly active people has remained about the same. Though we do need to stimulate increased participation, we must also strive to recognize the marvelous contributions that have been, and continue to be, made by our members.

## THE PROCEEDINGS — A HISTORY OF THE SOCIETY

Seventy-eight separate issues of the *Proceedings of the Hawaiian Entomological Society* have been published, at least one each year, since the very first in April 1906. This includes continuous publications and meetings through both World Wars. This is an enviable record. For reference purposes, the *Proceedings* is of great importance to entomologists in Hawaii, and I believe it is not used as much as it should be. However, the value of the *Proceedings* is not only in the science that it has presented in papers and notes, but also as a history of the entomological and social life of its members and often the political and social tenor of the day. Nowhere is the color and flavor of this history more evident than in the "Notes and Exhibitions" — a feature unique to our publication. Besides the reports on insect imports and exports, member travels, new hosts, new collecting equipment, book notices, obituaries, and more, where else might I learn:

- that our first list of common names was adopted Mar. 6, 1913.
- about the 1933 court case against a pineapple canning co. on account of a "tarantula" being found in a can of pineapples. (Our learned members identified this as prob. our ubiquitous *Heteropoda regia*.)
- that on Dec. 7, 1933, the HES, in a resolution put forth by Noel Krauss, adopted the Kamehameha Butterfly as the territorial insect and urged action be taken to have the Kam Butterfly officially adopted by the Legislature as the Territorial Butterfly or Insect. Apparently, no such action was ever taken, and we have today no state insect.
- that the "95% effective" remedy for cockroaches in Nov. 1940 was 1 grm of tartar emetic in 25 cc of honey.
- that every year since 1958 we have participated in the Science Fair and given awards for best entomological exhibit.
- that already in Jan. 1961, C.E. Pemberton had warned of the possibility of importing insects to the islands during Xmas season when it is impossible to inspect all trees shipped in.
- that in January 1969, we became an affiliate of the Entomological Society of America.
- and that in the same year, Sept. 1969, we became a non-profit institution in Hawaii.

So what has happened in recent years? Though there has been some decline in number of journal pages published and number of papers appearing in an issue over the decades, I do not think this has been significant or is related to a decreasing scientific effort or interest in the *Proceedings*; more likely, printing costs and the more parsimonious writing style of recent times have led to shorter papers. However, it is evident that the decline in "Notes and Exhibitions" detected by Toshi Nishida in 1959 has continued. As examples, numbers of notes in the 1950's, already in decline from the heyday of 1916–1926, averaged 88/year (range 72–128

notes/year); 1960's, averaged 65/year (37–102); the number rose in 1970's to average 75/year (62–102). However, last year (1982) there were but 25 notes total and this year (1983) 19 notes.

### FISCAL HAPPENINGS

At the end of the 1st year of the Society's life, the balance in the treasury was \$67.18 (having earned \$2.82 interest). The early years were a continuing struggle to keep financially afloat. Others before me have applauded the large role that the HSPA played in the success and continuation of the Society, and I add my thanks to theirs. From 1915, when the Trustees of HSPA approved a sum of \$100/year, to 1974 when the yearly appropriation was \$1500, HSPA provided an annual contribution for publication of our *Proceedings*. There were other benefactors on a smaller scale through the years, but the HSPA was the financial anchor that stabilized the Society.

At times, HES did not have enough in the treasury to cover even the cost of printing the Index, for which the Society usually paid itself. As an example, in September 1934 when the bill for the Index for Vol. 8 arrived, the treasury was about \$88 short of the bill for \$223.50. All members who could do so were urged to pay their 1935 dues in advance, so that the index bill could be paid. Can you imagine our indignation today if we were asked to pay our dues in advance? The *Proceedings* is silent on how the money was finally gotten, but the bill was finally met.

I'd like to point out here that from the 1920's to the 1960's, engendered by continuing appeals from the Zoological Society of London, Society members gave voluntary contributions to support publication of the *Zoological Record*. These contributions amounted to from \$25–50 each year on a pass-the-hat basis. This was despite our own financial plight. Over the years, despite a constrained treasury, the Society has given generously to many memorial and scholarship funds. This year we were able to help the Nature Conservancy in acquisition of the Waikamoi Preserve on Maui with a \$500 contribution.

By comparison with the leaner years, we are in better shape today. However, printing costs continue to rise, and we are somewhat dependent on the UH subsidy of \$1500. If you recall, in 1974, the University of Hawaii Library (Hamilton) became the official permanent depository for HES periodicals and exchanges, and provides as part of that agreement \$1500 annually to the Society. If we are to continue to publish our *Proceedings*, we will soon have to consider raising dues or generating other possible sources of income.

### SO WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?

It has been said that nostalgia is like a grammar lesson: you find the present tense and the past perfect. There is always a danger of idealizing the past and finding little worthwhile in the present. However, I do feel that there are some problems in the Society, particularly with regard to attendance, participation, and involvement of members.

Toshi Nishida in 1959 noted that the Program Section of meetings had then been recently strengthened by formation of a Program Committee in hopes that this would stimulate attendance. That that measure hasn't worked very well over the long term may be because a talk on one specific facet of Entomology, though strong and compelling, is no longer likely to appeal to a substantial percentage of our membership.

We are an extremely heterogeneous group living in a larger society full of numerous and complex problems. We are, for better or worse, no longer a cohesive unit of individuals all interested in the same thing. Moreover, our meetings have to compete with the pressure of work, an electronic age full of computer generated imaging, dolby stereo, and lasar disks, and the attraction of other modern activities, as jogging, bodybuilding, break dancing, or centering on the universal. Is it any wonder that our meetings can no longer be billed as the social and intellectual event of the month? However, I do believe whether you are a member to advance your economic work, to enrich what you bring to the classroom, to advance pure science, or just to have fun, there *is* something here for you.

So how can we bring more color and interest into our Society and improve participation? Here are a few of my thoughts:

1. We can curry the attendance of graduate students and encourage them to give summaries of, or talks on, their research. Advisors and University of Hawaii professors might even consider mandatory attendance where schedules allow. This requires only a realization that improved interaction with entomology students will benefit us all and that the young are our Society's future.

2. We could have representatives from each organization give a monthly or bimonthly recap of happenings in their institutions. In this way we can share significant events, such as new building plans, grants, graduate degrees, new collecting/trapping equipment, and so on.

3. We could all of us try to consider Society meetings as a "must do" stop for visitors, new staff, entomology students, etc.

4. We could send delegates to local meetings of significance to our members. In 1972, for example, Zero Population Growth was of enough interest to the Society to send a member of the Liaison Committee to attend a meeting in town.

5. Walter Giffard's Presidential Address of 1919 noted the *de regueur* ingredient in any group when he said "... we must never lose sight of the chief essential to the success of any society, and that is earnest cooperation." We must cultivate such togetherness and cooperation. We could have some social activities additional to this Annual Dinner, such as an annual hike or picnic. We could resurrect the lost tradition of having pictures of Society members taken together at intervals for publication in the *Proceedings*. Group photos have a way of solidifying relationships and are great fun to look back on. More meetings on other islands would help foster a feeling of belonging in the outer island membership. Finally, we should not be afraid to try new ideas, maybe even silly or impractical ones to see what will work. These may open up new possibilities for improvement and change.

Very importantly, we should acknowledge the contributions, as well as the good science, of our members. I would like to extend special recognition at this time to Toshiyuki Nishida for his generous contribution this year of \$100. We should also thank K. Sakimura, who has contributed monetarily this year and for the last several years.

A vital measure of any group is its spirit. Our professional attainments must be matched by our vigor if we are to continue our tradition of excellence in rhythm with the present era. The dialog of the Chesire Cat and Alice may be relevant here:

"Cheshire Puss," said Alice, "... would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where—," said Alice.

**"Then" said the Cat "it doesn't matter which way you go."**

**I have no doubts that we do very much care which way we are headed and that the Hawaiian Entomological Society has the heart to continue its long tradition of science, distilled with cooperation and pride, and will choose to move forward.**